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Pages of the United States Congress: Selection, Duties, and Program Administration

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Summary

For more than 150 years, messengers known as pages have served the United States Congress. Currently, approximately 100 young men and women from across the nation serve as pages at any given time. Pages must be high school juniors and at least 16 years of age. Several incumbent and former Members of Congress as well as other prominent Americans have been congressional pages.

Senator Daniel Webster appointed the first Senate page in 1829. The first House pages began their service in 1842. The first women were appointed as pages in 1971.

Pages must be appointed and sponsored by a Member of Congress for one or two semesters of a school year, or a summer session. They are appointed on a rotating basis pursuant to criteria set by the House and Senate leadership, which determines the Members eligible to sponsor a page. Academic standing is among the most important criteria used in the final selection of pages. Prospective pages are advised to contact their Senators or Representative to request consideration for a page appointment. This fact sheet is one of a series on the legislative process. For more information on the legislative process, please see [http://www.crs.gov/products/guides/guidehome.shtml].

Duties

Pages serve principally as messengers. They carry documents between the House and Senate, Members' offices, committees, and the Library of Congress. They also prepare the House and Senate chambers for each day's business by distributing the *Congressional Record* and other documents related to the day's agenda, assist in the cloakrooms and chambers, and when Congress is in session, sit near the dais where they may be summoned by Members for assistance.

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House Pages[1]

There are 72 House pages, 48 of whom were selected by Republicans and 24 by Democrats. The House page program is administered by the Office of the Clerk and supervised by the House Page Board, chaired by Representative John Shimkus (R-IL). Members of the Page Board include Representatives Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) and Dale Kildee (D-MI), as well as the Clerk and the Sergeant at Arms of the House.

In the 108th Congress, the Page Board established new criteria for the appointment of House pages. These include requirements that Members select applicants from their home states, a one semester of service limit, and the creation of an admissions panel (comprised of the Clerk of the House, staff from the Page School and dormitory, and floor staff representing both parties), which will interview all prospective pages. The House leadership will maintain final approval of all students selected for the program.

House pages are paid at the annual rate of $18,817. Automatic, monthly deductions are taken from their salaries for federal and state taxes, Social Security, and a residence hall fee of $400, which includes five breakfasts and seven dinners per week. The pages are required to live in the supervised House Page Dormitory near the Capitol. They are responsible for the cost of their uniforms — navy jackets, dark grey slacks or skirts, long sleeve white shirt, and black shoes — and transportation to and from Washington, DC.

During the school year, they are educated in the House Page School located in the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress. The page school, which is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, offers a junior-year high-school curriculum, college preparatory courses, and extracurricular and weekend activities. Classes are usually held five days a week, commencing at 6:45 a.m., prior to the convening of the House.

Any questions regarding the operation of the House page program should be directed to Ms. Ellen McNamara, Office of the Clerk, H-154, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC 20515. The telephone number at the Clerk's office is (202) 225-7000.

Senate Pages

There are 30 Senate pages, 18 of whom were selected by the Republicans and 12 by the Democrats. The Senate Sergeant at Arms supervises the Senate page program.

Senate pages are paid at the annual rate of $20,491. Automatic deductions are made from their salaries for taxes and Social Security as well as the $600 residence hall fee, which includes breakfast and dinner seven days a week. Pages must pay their transportation costs to Washington, DC, but their uniforms are supplied. The uniforms consist of navy blue suits, white shirts, dark socks, and black shoes.

The Senate provides its pages supervised housing in the Daniel Webster Page Residence near the Hart Senate Office Building. Questions regarding the Senate page program or Webster Hall should be directed to Ms. Elizabeth Roach, Director, United

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[1] For further information, please refer to [http://pageprogram.house.gov].

States Senate Page Program, Webster Hall, Washington, DC 20510-7248. Ms. Roach's telephone number is (202) 228-1291.

The Senate Page School is located in the lower level of Webster Hall. Pages who serve during the academic year are educated in this school, which is also accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. The junior-year curriculum is geared toward college preparation and emphasis is given to the unique learning opportunities available in Washington, DC. Early morning classes are held prior to the convening of the Senate. Any questions about the Senate Page School should be directed to Mrs. Kathryn Weeden, Principal, United States Senate Page School, Washington, DC 20510-7248. The telephone number at the school is (202) 224-3926.